

Message Text

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 1505

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, LE, IS
SUBJ: DANY CHAMOUN COMMENTS ON ISRAELI INTENTIONS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. ON MARCH 20 DANY CHAMOUN, CLAIMING HE WAS IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH ISRAELIS, SAID: THE IDF WOULD NOT LEAVE SOUTH LEBANON FOR THREE TO FOUR MONTHS. THE ISRAELIS PLANNED TO OCCUPY ALL OF SOUTH LEBANON UP TO THE LITANI, INCLUDING THE CITY OF TYRE. THEY DID NOT INTEND TO CROSS THE LITANI AT THE MOMENT BUT WOULD DO SO IF PROVOKED. THE ISRAELI INVASION HAD BEEN VERY GOOD FOR LEBANON, BECAUSE THE PALESTINIANS HAD TO BE DEALT WITH. CHAMOUN'S AIDE NABIL NOUJAIM BELIEVED A PROLONGED ISRAELI PRESENCE IN LEBANON WOULD LEAD TO A FULL-SCALE CIVIL WAR. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT. DANY MAY BE EXAGGERATING FOR EFFECT, BUT I HOPE THE ISRAELIS KNOW THAT WE ARE INALTERABLY OPPOSED TO THEIR REMAINING IN LEBANON FOR THREE TO FOUR MONTHS OR TO ANY FURTHER EXTENSION OF HOSTILITIES. END SUMMARY.

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2. EMBOFF CALLED ON NLP MILITARY COMMANDER DANY CHAMOUN AND LATTER'S AIDE, NA IL NOUJAIM, ON MARCH 20. (PLEASE PROTECT BOTH SOURCES AT THEIR REQUEST.) DANY, NOTING THAT HE WAS IN CONTACT WITH THE ISRAELIS, OFFERED THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS.

3. THE ISRAELI ATTACK.

A. ISRAEL HAD BEEN PLANNING THE ATTACK INTO LEBANON "FOR TWO YEARS". THE MARCH 11 TERRORIST INCIDENT IN ISRAEL WAS ONLY A PRETEXT.

B. THE IDF WOULD NOT LEAVE SOUTH LEBANON FOR THREE TO FOUR MONTHS AT LEAST. THE ISRAELIS:

--BELIEVED THAT UNITED NATIONS TROOPS COULD NOT ADEQUATELY PROTECT ISRAEL'S SECURITY;

--WOULD INSIST ON THE INSERTION OF AN EFFECTIVE LEBANESE SECURITY FORCE BEFORE AGREEING TO WITHDRAW.

C. WITHIN TWO WEEKS THE GOL WOULD HAVE 1,000 SOLDIERS AND 200 MEMBERS OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE READY TO MOVE TO SOUTH LEBANON. ADMITTEDLY, THEY WERE NOT ENOUGH TO EFFECTIVELY MAINTAIN SECURITY IN SOUTH LEBANON, EVEN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS FORCES. AT LEAST 4,000 LEBANESE SOLDIERS WERE REQUIRED, BUT IT WOULD TAKE NINE MONTHS TO ASSEMBLE THAT MANY.

4. OTHER ISRAELI INTENTIONS.

A. THE ISRAELIS PLANNED TO OCCUPY ALL OF SOUTH LEBANON UP TO THE LITANI RIVER. THEY WERE GOING TO TAKE TYRE AND RASHDIYAH CAMP, BUT GRADUALLY. THEY WOULD ALLOW THE RESIDENTS TO FLEE BEFORE ENTERING THESE POSITIONS. THE ISRAELIS DID NOT INTEND AT THE MOMENT TO TAKE NABATIYAH OR HASBIYAH.

B. AT PRESENT, THE IDF DID NOT INTEND TO CROSS THE LITANI. THE ISRAELIS WERE, HOWEVER, PREPARED TO "MOVE NORTH" AS FAR
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AS REQUIRED TO DEAL WITH THE PALESTINIANS, IF:

--THE PALESTINIANS CONTINUED SIGNIFICANT RESISTANCE, PARTICULARLY ARTILLERY SHELLING. (THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT ATTACK NORTH, HOWEVER, IN RESPONSE TO ISOLATED OR MINOR ATTACKS BY THE PALESTINIANS.)

--THE SYRIANS DID NOT ACT "WITHIN ONE WEEK" TO CONTROL PALESTINIAN ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON;

--THE SYRIANS DID NOT ASSURE THAT THE ROAD BETWEEN BEIRUT AND TYRE WAS OPENED FOR THE LEBANESE ARMY TO MOVE SOUTH AND PALESTINIAN CIVILIANS TO MOVE NORTH. (THE SYRIANS SHOULD DIRECTLY CONTROL THE ROAD AS FAR SOUTH AS ZAHRANI AND HAVE THE PALESTINIANS DO SO FURTHER SOUTH.)

5. CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES

A. THE CHRISTIANS WOULD WELCOME THE ISRAELIS IF THEY DID MOVE NORTH TOWARDS BEIRUT AND WOULD JOIN THEM IN FIGHTING THE PALESTINIANS. NEVERTHELESS, THE NLP HOPED THAT AN ATTACK NORTH WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY AND THAT THE FIGHTING WOULD NOT SPREAD. (COMMENT: EMBOFF REPLIED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS UNEQUIVOCALLY AGAINST ANY FURTHER FIGHTING AND BELIEVED THERE SHOULD BE QUICK AND COMPLETE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION PASSED ON MARCH 19.)

B. DANY ALSO REMARKED THE ISRAELI INCURSION HAD BEEN VERY GOOD FOR LEBANON. IT WAS TIME FOR THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM TO BE RESOLVED. THE PALESTINIANS HAD TO BE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL AND THE LEBANESE MUSLIMS HAD TO DECIDE ONCE AND FOR ALL WHETHER THEY WERE LEBANESE OR ARABS FIRST.

C. AFTER DANY HAD LEFT (FOR AN APPOINTMENT AT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY), NOUJAIM COMMENTED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO SAY SOMETHING THAT "DANY PROBABLY WOULD NOT LIKE:" AN ISRAELI PRESENCE FOR ANOTHER THREE TO FOUR MORE MONTHS IN LEBANON MIGHT WELL PROVOKE A FULL-SCALE CIVIL WAR. IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE U.S. PERSUADE THE ISRAELIS TO LEAVE WITHIN ONE MONTH. AS A FIRST STEP, NOUJAIM BELIEVED, UNITED NATIONS OBSERVERS SHOULD BE POSTED ALONG THE THREE BRIDGES OVER THE LITANI RIVER NO LATER THAN MARCH 20

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TO INHIBIT THE ISRAELIS FROM USING AN ISOLATED INCIDENT AS A PRETEXT TO MOVE NORTH. SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF SOLDIERS WERE NOT NEEDED; THE MERE SHOWING OF THE UNITED NATIONS FLAG ALONG THE THREE BRIDGES WOULD ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSE.

6. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT. DANY MAY BE EXAGGERATING FOR EFFECT. I HOPE, HOWEVER, THERE IS NO MISUNDERSTANDING THAT THE UNITED STATES IS INALTERABLY OPPOSED TO ANY FURTHER SPREAD OF HOSTILITIES, WHATEVER THE PRETEXT. THE ISRAELI INVASION HAS SO FAR DANGEROUSLY STRAINED THE FABRIC OF THE LEBANESE STATE. A PROLONGED ISRAELI PRESENCE MIGHT, AND AN ISRAELI INVASION NORTH ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD, TEAR THAT FABRIC IRREPARABLY.

PARKER

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